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EXAMINER
IWARERE, OLUSEYE

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE <u>3</u> MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on <u>18 December 2008</u>.
2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**.   2b)☒ This action is non-final.
3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) <u>1-44</u> is/are pending in the application.
    4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6)☒ Claim(s) <u>1-44</u> is/are rejected.
7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10)☒ The drawing(s) filed on <u>27 February 2004</u> is/are: a)☒ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.
    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
    a)☐ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:
      1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
      2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
      3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1)☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2)☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3)☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4)☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5)☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6)☐ Other: _____ .

DETAILED ACTION

1.   This communication is in response to the correspondence sent on December 18,

2008. Claims 1 – 43, as amended and newly added claim 44 are currently pending and

have been considered below.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

2.   A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set

forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this

application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set

forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action

has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on

12/18/2008 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3.   The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that

form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

> A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –
>
> (b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

4.   **Claims 1 – 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by**

Siegel (2005/0137901).

        As per claim 1, Siegel discloses a method for processing a product returns

using a plurality of management systems, comprising:

inspecting the product return to determine a disposition decision for the product

return (col. 6, lines 14 – 26 discuss inspecting the item);

capturing the disposition decision for the product return in a <u>computer based</u> first

management system (fig. 1 depicts capturing the disposition decision);

communicating the captured disposition decision from the <u>computer based</u> first

management system to a <u>computer based</u> second management system (abstract

discusses crediting the customer's account in response to disposition); and

triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process

in the <u>computer based</u> second management system (fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor

as triggered by the return decision).

As per claim 2, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based</u> first management

system is a <u>computer based</u> warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts warehouse

management).

As per claim 3, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based</u> second

management system is a <u>computer based</u> customer relationship management (CRM)

system, and the at least one process is updating a customer account (abstract

discusses crediting a customer account).

As per claim 4, Siegel discloses wherein the <u>computer based</u> first management

system is a <u>computer based</u> warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts a

warehouse management system) and the <u>computer based</u> second management system

is a <u>computer based</u> customer relationship management (CRM) system (abstract

discusses customer account management), and wherein the method further comprises

sending a CRM notification from the <u>computer based</u> warehouse management system

to the CRM system (abstract discusses crediting a customer account in response to the

disposition of the return).

As per claim 5, Siegel discloses, wherein triggering comprises updating a

customer account with the CRM system based on the CRM notification (abstract

discusses crediting customer account based on return decision).

As per claim 6, Siegel discloses, wherein the at least one process is performing

customer management (abstract discusses crediting customer account).

As per claims 7, Siegel discloses, further comprising triggering, in response to

the captured disposition decision, at least one process in the <u>computer based</u> first

management system, the <u>computer based</u> first management system comprising a

<u>computer based</u> warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor).

As per claim 8, Siegel discloses, a method for processing a returned product,

the method comprising:

inspecting a returned product to determine a disposition of the returned product

(col. 6, lines 14 – 26 discuss inspecting the item);

capturing, in a computer based first management system, a decision code

representing the determined disposition of the returned product, the decision code being

uniquely identifying a set of activities (fig. 1 depicts determined disposition and col. 4.

lines 15 – 30 discuss uniquely identifying eligible returns); and

triggering each activity identified by the decision code, wherein at least one of the

activities is triggered in a computer based second management system (abstract

discusses crediting customer account).

As per claim 9, Siegel discloses, further comprising: providing a unique identifier

to identify the returned product (fig. 1 depicts determined disposition and col. 4. lines 15

– 30 discuss uniquely identifying eligible returns); and

communicating the decision code and the unique identifier from the computer

based first management system to the computer based second management system

(fig. 1 depicts and abstract discusses crediting customer account and disposition

information).

As per claim 10, Siegel discloses, wherein the computer based first

management system comprises a computer based warehouse management system,

and wherein the triggering comprises creating, in the computer based warehouse

management system, a transfer order for the returned product (fig. 5 depicts returning to

the vendor).

As per claim 11, Siegel discloses wherein the <u>computer based </u>second

management system comprises a customer relationship management (CRM) system,

and wherein the triggering further comprises sending, to the CRM system, a CRM

notification for the returned product and updating, in the CRM system, a customer

account based on the CRM notification for the returned product (abstract discusses

crediting the customer account and fig. 1 depicts disposition decision information).

As per claim 12, Siegel discloses a method for processing a product return,

comprising:

> providing a set of decision codes (fig. 2 depicts a return guideline database);

> inspecting the product return at a warehouse and selecting a decision code from

the set of decision codes, in a <u>computer based </u>first management system, based on an

inspection result (col. 6, lines 14 – 26 discuss inspecting the item);

> updating a record, in a <u>computer based </u>second management system, for the

product return to include the decision code selected from the set of decision codes

(abstract discusses crediting customer account); and

> triggering an activity to be performed, in the <u>computer based </u>second

management system, for the product return based on the decision code in the record

(fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor as triggered by the return decision).

As per claim 13, Siegel discloses, wherein the updating comprises updating the

record with an effort code, the effort code providing information related to an additional

effort activity for the product return (fig. 5 depicts determining eligibility of return).

As per claim 14, Siegel discloses, wherein the record comprises a warehouse

(WH) request and a unique identifier for the product return (col. 4. lines 15 – 30 discuss

uniquely identifying eligible returns).

As per claim 15, Siegel discloses, wherein the triggering comprises issuing a

transfer order for the product return based on the decision code (fig. 5 depicts returning

to vendor which is triggered by the decision).

As per claim 16, Siegel discloses, wherein the method further comprises

transferring the product return in response to the transfer order and performing a follow-

up activity on the product return (fig. 5 depicts transferring the product to the vendor).

As per claim 17, Siegel discloses wherein the method further comprises

communicating a disposition decision based on the inspection result to a computer

based customer relationship management (CRM) system ([abstract] discusses

communicating the disposition of the return with the crediting of the customer account).

As per claim 18, Siegel discloses, a computer readable medium comprising instructions for carrying out a method for processing a product return, the method comprising:

capturing a disposition decision for the product return in a <u>computer based</u> first management system (fig. 1 depicts capturing disposition decision information); and

triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process related to the product return in a <u>computer based</u> second management system (abstract discusses crediting a customer account based on return).

As per claim 19, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based</u> first management system is a <u>computer based</u> warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts a warehouse management system).

As per claim 20, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based</u> second management system is a <u>computer based</u> customer relationship (CRM) management system, and the at least one process is performing customer management (abstract discusses crediting a customer account).

As per claim 21, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based</u> first management system is a <u>computer based</u> warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts a warehouse management system) and the <u>computer based</u> second management system is a <u>computer based</u> customer relationship management (CRM)

system, and wherein the method further comprises communicating a CRM notification

from the <u>computer based </u>warehouse management system to the CRM system (abstract

discusses crediting a customer account in response to the disposition of the return).

As per claim 22, Siegel discloses, wherein triggering comprises updating a

customer account with the CRM system based on the CRM notification (abstract

discusses crediting customer account).

As per claim 23, Siegel discloses wherein the at least one process is performing

customer management (abstract discusses crediting customer account).

As per claim 24, Siegel further discloses comprising triggering, in response to

the captured disposition decision, at least one process in the <u>computer based </u>first

management system, the <u>computer based </u>first management system comprising a

<u>computer based </u>warehouse management system (fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor).

As per claim 25, Siegel discloses a computer readable medium comprising

instructions for carrying out a method for processing a returned product, the method

comprising:

inspecting a returned product to determine a disposition of the returned product;

capturing, in a <u>computer based </u>first management system (col. 6, lines 14 – 26 discuss

inspecting the item), a decision code representing the determined disposition of the

returned product, the decision code uniquely identifying a set of activities (fig. 1 depicts

and col. 4. lines 15 – 30 discuss uniquely identifying eligible returns); and

triggering each activity identified by the decision code, wherein at least one of the

activities is triggered in a computer based second management system (abstract

discusses crediting customer account based on decision).

As per claim 26, Siegel discloses, wherein the computer based second

management system is a computer based customer relationship management (CRM)

system and the triggering comprises triggering an update to a customer account with

the CRM system based on the decision code (abstract discusses crediting customer

account based on decision).

As per claim 27, Siegel discloses wherein the computer based first management

system comprises a computer based warehouse management system, and wherein the

triggering comprises creating, in the computer based warehouse management system,

a transfer order for the returned product (fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor).

As per claim 28, Siegel discloses, wherein the computer based second

management system comprises a computer based customer relationship management

(CRM) system, and wherein the triggering comprises sending, to (CRM) system, a CRM

notification to trigger customer management (abstract discusses crediting customer

account based on disposition decision information).

As per claim 29, Siegel discloses a computer readable medium comprising

instructions for carrying out a method for processing a product return, the method

comprising:

provide a set of decision codes (fig. 2 depicts a return guideline database);

updating, in a <u>computer based </u>first management system, a record for the product

return to include a decision code from the set of decision codes that corresponds to a

disposition decision for the product return (fig. 1 depicts decision information); and

triggering, in a <u>computer based </u>second management system, a process to be

carried out based on the disposition decision (abstract discusses crediting customer

account).

As per claim 30, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based </u>first

management system comprises a warehouse management system, and wherein the

record comprises a warehouse request (WHR) (fig. 5. depicts warehouse management

and return to vendor).

As per claim 31, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer based </u>second

management system comprises a <u>computer based </u>customer relationship management

(CRM) system (abstract discusses crediting customer account).

As per claim 32, Siegel discloses, wherein the triggering comprises triggering

the CRM system to update a customer account based on the disposition decision

(abstract discusses crediting customer account in response to disposition decision).

As per claim 33, Siegel discloses, wherein the method further comprises

transferring the product return based on the update of the record in the <u>computer based</u>

first management system (fig. 5 depicts returning to vendor).

As per claim 34, Siegel discloses a system for processing a product return, the

system comprising:

a <u>computer based </u>first management module for receiving a decision code and

creating, in response to receiving the decision code, a first record relating to the

product return; and a <u>computer based </u>second management module for receiving the

first record and for initiating an update to a second record in response to receiving the

record (abstract discusses decision information and crediting a customer account).

As per claim 35, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer </u>based first

management module is a warehouse management module (fig. 5 depicts warehouse

management).

As per claim 36, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer </u>based second

management system is a customer relationship management (CRM) module (abstract

discusses crediting customer account).

As per claim 37, Siegel discloses (Original) The system of clam 36, wherein the

first record comprises a CRM notification (abstract discusses crediting customer

account).

As per claim 38, Siegel discloses, wherein the second record comprises a

customer account (abstract discusses a customer account).

As per claim 39, Siegel discloses, wherein the decision code uniquely identifies

a set of activities to be performed in accordance with a disposition decision for the

product return (fig. 1 depicts determined disposition and col. 4. lines 15 – 30 discuss

uniquely identifying eligible returns).

As per claim 40, Siegel discloses, wherein a unique identifier for the product

return is received by the <u>computer based </u>second management module when receiving

the first record (col. 4. lines 15 – 30 discuss uniquely identifying eligible returns and

abstract discusses crediting customer account in response to disposition decision).

As per claim 41, Siegel discloses, wherein the <u>computer</u> based first

management module issues a transfer order to transfer the product return based on the

decision code (fig. 5 depicts transferring product based on decision).

As per claim 42, Siegel discloses wherein an effort code for an additional effort

activity related to the product return is received by the <u>computer</u> based second

management module when receiving the first record (fig. 5 depicts determining eligibility

of return).

As per claim 44. Siegel discloses a method for processing a product return

using a plurality of management systems, comprising:

inspecting the product return to determine a disposition decision for the product

return (col. 6, lines 14 – 26 discuss inspecting the item);

capturing the disposition decision for the product return in a computer based

warehouse management system (fig. 1 depicts disposition decision information);

communicating the captured disposition decision from the computer based

warehouse management system to a computer based customer relationship

management system (abstract discusses crediting the customer's account in response

to disposition); and

triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process

in the computer based customer relationship management system (abstract discusses

crediting customer's account),

wherein the process is selected from the group comprising a put away process, a

transfer stock process, a scrap process, and a reject back to customer process (fig. 5

depicts returning to vendor).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5.   The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set
> forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and
> the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the
> invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains.
> Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

6.   Claim 43 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over

Siegel (2005/0137901) in view of Haseltine (2001/0032143).

As per claim 43, Siegel discloses the claimed invention but fails to explicitly

disclose wherein the second management module determines, based on the effort

code, an effort value to charge a customer account for the additional effort activity.

Haseltine teaches a method and system providing out-sourced, merchandise

return services, wherein the second management module determines, based on the

effort code, an effort value to charge a customer account for the additional effort activity

([0011] discusses a restocking fee, which is construed as an effort value charge).

From this teaching of Haseltine, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary

skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the method and apparatus

for efficient handling of product return transactions to include the effort value charge,

taught by Haseltine, in order to offset the cost of service.

Conclusion

7.   The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to

applicant's disclosure. Whitman (2002/0019785) which discloses a system and method

for returning merchandise. Rogers (6,757,663), which discloses an electronic

registration system for product transactions and Dutta (2002/0138356), which discloses

Third party merchandise return system.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the

examiner should be directed to OLUSEYE IWARERE whose telephone number is

(571)270-5112. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's

supervisor, Matthew S. Gart can be reached on (571)272-3955. The fax phone number

for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the

Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for

published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should

you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic

Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a

USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information

system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Matthew S Gart/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art
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OI